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BOOK NOTES

Mondonga M. Mokoli. *State Against Development: The Experience of Post-1965 Zaire*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1992. \$45 hardcover.

The post colonial era in the Third World has been characterized by state interventionism. As indigenous elites assumed power after the collapse of European imperial rule, they sought not only to consolidate their control over the state apparatus but to extend it. The declared intention of their statism was to promote economic and social development. They believed that the considerable resources of the state could be mobilized to promote economic growth, foster social progress and transform backward agrarian communities into advanced industrial nations.

In this detailed study of government rural development programs in Zaire, Mokoli argues that the statist strategy for development failed miserably. Although the country's political leaders consistently claimed that government actively promotes development for the benefit of ordinary people, the record is dismal. Applying established theories of the state to analyze the cause of this situation, Mokoli concludes that the absence of a pluralistic political system has permitted elites to take control of the state for their own benefit. While Mokoli's study has obvious relevance to other nations and for understanding the role of the state in development, his findings should not foster the conclusion that statism has been universally disastrous.

Klaus Misgeld, Karl Molin and Klas Amark (Eds.). *Creating Social Democracy: A Century of the Social Democratic Labor Party in Sweden*. University Park, PA: Penn State Press, 1993. \$65.00 hardcover, \$16.95 papercover.

Despite widespread ignorance of what Swedish social democracy comprises, it has either been a subject of derision or veneration in American political circles. For some, the Swedish system offers a utopian vision of what government direction of economic and social affairs can achieve. For others, Sweden is an oppressive society in which individual creativity is stifled by high taxation, government regulation and social uniformity.

This definitive book should dispel many stereotypes about Sweden. Anyone who has an interest in Swedish society, and in the social democratic tradition generally, will benefit from reading this highly informative publication. Designed specifically to trace the evolution of social democracy in the country and to assess its achievements, the book is an invaluable resource covering topics as diverse as education, local government, housing, international affairs, agriculture, family policy and social security. The book examines the Swedish system critically, and the authors do not hesitate to expose its weaknesses and failures. Despite current difficulties, and disaffection with state intervention from some sections of the population, Swedish social democracy has fostered significant social gains. Whatever one's personal biases, it is hard to disagree with the book's conclusion that social democracy in Sweden has produced an extraordinarily high quality of life for the nation's citizens.

Joel A. Devine and James D. Wright. *The Greatest of Evils: Urban Poverty and the American Underclass*. Hawthorn, NY: Aldine de Gruyter, 1993. \$34.95 hardcover; \$17.95 papercover.

This significant book provides a comprehensive account of poverty in the urban areas of the United States today. It focuses particularly on the 'underclass' phenomenon but does not become entangled in theoretical and ideological debates about whether an underclass exists, or whether sociologists should use the term.

Examining various operational definitions, the book uses the 'poverty threshold' approach to account for the incidence of poverty. Although the threshold approach is also applied to examine rural poverty, the book focuses primarily on the urban underclass. Particular attention is paid to family issues, employment, welfare, substance abuse, crime and violence. The final chapter attempts to sketch out a policy agenda for the future which urges the federal government to create programs that will enhance job creation, social welfare, education and health care. The authors argue that this is only through national policies and programs that urban poverty can be eradicated and that new opportunities for the deprived and oppressed of American cities can be created.